A LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT HONORABLE

WILLIAM PITT.

By William Drennan.

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A

LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT HONORABLE WILLIAM PITT,

SIR,

YOU are the Miniſter of innovation; and, from the hour that you ceaſed being the active agent of reform, you have become the indirect inſtrument of its attainment. The latter end of your adminiſtration will yet juſtify its beginning; what the people themſelves have failed in doing, Pitt will effectuate; and the ſon will accompliſh within the century the famous prediction of the father.

The idea of an incorporate Union between Britain and Ireland ſeems purely an Engliſh meaſure, framed in the Engliſh cabinet (probably forced upon an Iriſh one) for Engliſh purpoſes, and from an Engliſh ſtate neceſsity, brought on by exiſting circumſtances, of which in words and works you, Sir, are the chief, or at leaſt oſtenſible author; for a high and mighty monoſyllable as you feel yourſelf to be, you are, as your great father was before you—but (and nothing but) the convenient tool of a regulated faction. In the uniform habit of curſing and mimicking the French revolution, your inverted order ends where *it* began, by decreeing the unity and indiviſibility of the empire.

It is not from the boſom of a parental, providential, impartial care, from any conſideration of equal relationſhip to the whole family of the people, that this plan has proceeded. It ſtrikes me, and I believe it ſtrikes you, merely as a *military* idea,

idea, as much ſo as the concentration of forces on the felt weakneſs of ſcattered garriſons. It ariſes, as I think all your miniſterial meaſures have done, not from original genius, or fertility of reſource, but from the irreſiſtible preſſure of temporary exigencies. You have ever been the paſsive puppet of ſeſsional expediency; the ſlave and ſuppliant of exiſting circumſtances, impotent to create them, and unable to control. Directed, as you ſeem always to have been by the directory, this warlike procedure of an Union is nothing more nor leſs than the reply valiant to their late levy of 200,000 men; not by any means proceeding from a magnanimous care of the common-weal, combining the philoſophy of the hiſtorian with the providence of the legiſlator.

The exiſting circumſtances, (beyond which boundary you were never known to ſtray) the period choſen for ſuch a propoſition, the ſecrecy long adopted, the proſeſsion

feſsion and habits of that perſon whoſe title of lieutenant-general very properly precedes that of general governor, the ſudden tranſportation of the Engliſh militia—all appear to manifeſt this incorporate Union as, in reality, a mere *ruſe de guerre*, the conſequences of which, as a civil, political, *national*, meaſure, have not arreſted—and perhaps, in the hurry of the manœuvre, could not arreſt the attention of Mr. Pitt.

It has been your policy, Sir, (and I think in this inſtance it is patriotic) to keep, by every means, the ſeat of war out of England. For this end you have endeavoured of late, with indifferent ſucceſs, to form continental coalitions, which, if they did take place, might avert impending danger, and whether they did or not, might ſtill have the effect of dividing and diſtracting the attention of the enemy. There has for ſome time paſt been reaſon to fear that this iſland might form the field of final

conflict

conflict between the two hoſtile powers or principles contending for the empire of the world; and this meaſure of an Union will, in my mind, make that certain, which was but probable. It is on Iriſh ground, and not on Engliſh, that *you* would deſire the battle to be tried—here, as a true Engliſhman, you would with the arena of conflict—and here, if any where, the point of contact, and tug of war. The meaſure of an Union, therefore, comes not ſo naturally from a cabinet council, as from a council of war, for the ſole purpoſe of placing this iſland *eaſily*, *expeditiouſly*, and *effectually*, in a ſtate of military requiſition, preparatory to its expected deſtination; we are to be ſhaped and rounded into a buckler for Britain—but it is *on* the buckler the heavy ſtrokes will fall.

You have made up your mind for the indefinite prolongation of the war. Some years have elapſed ſince you told the houſe that you were engaged in a conteſt which

would

would not end but with your life, with all their lives; and it is perfectly obvious, that all the councils, purpoſes, and plans of the two great contending European powers (*your* head, Sir, is one of them) are turned entirely into a military direction, and they are endeavouring, with rival celerity, to mould, or rather to hammer, whatever is malleable in ſurrounding countries, not into inſtruments of peace, but into weapons of war. No country ſo great as to be ſafe within the wind of this commotion, none ſo ſmall as not to be inſtigated, ſeduced or terrified, into this perilous, but to them profitleſs, conteſt. France wiſhes to aſsimilate abroad. Britain haſtens to conſolidate at home. The ſtrength which the one acquires by expanſion, the other ſtrives to get by conſolidation, by compreſsing all its parts cloſer to a common centre, by making its own centre the centre of the whole ſyſtem. This is the purpoſe of the Union—*not* to give ſpeed to the plough, or add wings to the ſhuttle—

but to concentrate the military force of the empire, and to organize the country ſo as beſt to favour the action of the military machine; to make an arſenal here, a poſt there, and an advanced redoubt of the whole iſland. You will no doubt direct that the Iriſh ſhould be ſuffered, by the garriſon of the iſland, to buy and ſell, like the Jews at Gibraltar.

The Union *cannot* therefore be deferred, as you judged proper in the viceroyalty of Fitzwilliam, until the period of *peace*, becauſe it is neither for the object or ends of peace it is *now* thought of. It is ſuggeſted in the moſt exaſperated ſeaſon of the moſt exaſperated war, ſuggeſted from military views, under military auſpices, with the proximate intention of converting the country into a complete military eſtabliſhment, and the ultimate reſolution of continuing this ſort of regimen, until reſiſtance of any kind, or from any rank,

will be thought as nothing leſs than mutiny, and to be treated accordingly.

You ſeem to me, Sir, to have gained more accurate and extenſive information concerning the ſtate of this country, than any of our great men in office were willing, or perhaps able, to give you. You ſeem to have concluded that our parliament has entirely loſt the confidence of the people, and, along with this, *that* controuling power neceſſary in a government, which *muſt now* aſſume a more than legiſlative ſeverity. It is become in your mind neceſſary for the ſupport of religion, good government, and ſocial order, to brace up with an iron collar the *diſtorted* ſpine of a body politic, become already too weak to ſupport itſelf, and grown decrepit even in infancy. The worſe than Egyptian plague of Iriſh Union, may have crept into places leaſt to be thought of, and for fear of loſing any of them at a time of ſuch fearful uncertainty,

you

you have thought it expedient to hold faſt theſe kingdoms, like keys, by a metal ring of Britiſh manufacture. Take care! One of them at leaſt, has been miſlaid, and may have been falſified.

From that fatal, or that fortunate hour, in which it was your choice to call forth the deſperate energies of the French people, rather than their firſt affections, which you could *at that time* have commanded; from that hour, in which your grand coalition frightened them out of all fear—but for their wives and children; urging them on to the ſame prodigies of natural inſtinct that the hen diſplays againſt the kite, and makes the lioneſs terrible when robbed of her young—when you deemed it impoſſible for two nations to maintain under different forms of goverment the uſual relations of life, or to continue bound by the ſympathy of their common nature, and the intereſts of their common liberty; from that ominous or auſpicious period of firſt

deviation, you have been driven along a courſe of conduct rather by neceſsity than obſtinacy or perſeverance. The ſtrong hand of deſtiny has ſilently led the miniſter of peace, and procraſtination, into the region of hazardous innovation, gloomy antipathy, and interminable war. To this ſole object are bent every paſsion and power of your mind, and this Union is now thought of merely to make Ireland a more productive war contribution. By what means? By ſimplifying the complexity of our conſtitution into a more complete unity and force of the executive power, without a danger of its being affected in future by impotence, irreſolution, and perſonal qualities of chief governors, or of being any longer thwarted by a capricious, proud, and ſelfiſh ariſtocracy. The fierce policy of Richelieu is combined with the ſerpentine guile of Mazarin, in order to break down thoſe provincial kingſhips (differing in name only from thoſe of old)

and

and to wheel away the obſtructing rubbiſh of borough feudality.

But there are no perſons more different than the ſanguine and the ſagacious. The mind of man, or of miniſter, when totally abſorbed in a preſent purſuit, loſes its preſcience, and is unable to ſee far into conſequences. While Richelieu was breaking the ariſtocracy he was preparing the ground for the "tiers etat." While he hewed down, with his axe of power, the giant ſons of the foreſt, he purified the putrid atmoſphere by more free and full ventilation. The vigorous virtue of the ſoil had then room to quicken, and to luxuriate. Ireland is a ſimilar moraſs of mind, rank rather than effete, and rank with a noxious vegetation. The removal of ſuch high and overſhading trees, as have caſt a deadly mildew on all beneath, may poſsibly improve the face of neglected nature. The ſavagery of the human mind may perhaps ſhew fertility in ſomething better than

than weeds, and the ſoft verdure of the ſoul may ſpring forth, like thoſe varieties of grateful green, which adorn and animate our lovely iſland. Plans of national education ought to be co-extenſive with the nation, and what of this kind has hitherto been practiſed is nothing more than ſcattering a buſhel of ſeed in the bog of Allen. The annihilation of the ariſtocracy (far indeed beyond your conſideration, as it was far from that of Richelieu) may turn out a providential *preparation* of the ſoil for the growth of a national character, joining ornament with utility, and literature with liberty, without any artificial manure or any parliamentary compoſt. Necker once thought of regenerating France by his edict upon *ſnuff*, and North imagined Ireland would be renovated by the privilege of growing *tobacco*, but perhaps you will rouſe the ſuſpended animation of the country by an excitement of a more pungent nature, and more permanent effect.

The meaſure appears indeed a brave one. It manifeſts much of the hardihood, and ſomewhat of the romance, which poſſeſſed the mind of your father, while the *ariſtocrat* might affirm it was the daring deed of a revolutionary ſpirit, inſtigated by the demon of democracy. The conſequence *he* might aver muſt be the eventual, perhaps immediate change of the preſent government, through the intervention of a military deſpotiſm. The *democrat* might readily acquieſce by recollecting that the extremes of government approximate; the deſpot unconſciouſly introduces the democrat, and this faireſt of iſlands may ariſe more fair from its convulſionary commotion, as from the anarchy of chaos (deſpotiſm is but anarchy) aroſe this faireſt of worlds.

The *ariſtocrat* might ſay, "HE is deprecating change, and at the ſame time accuſtoming the mind to change. He proteſts againſt reform, and he practiſes revolution.

volution. He is againſt the alteration of a cornice, and he is for upſetting the conſtitution. Has this man conſpired with our natural enemies to deſtroy our unrivalled conſtitution, and to endanger the natural as well as political life of our beloved monarch? Did he not begin the war, and continue it, for the more ſpeedy propagation of jacobinical republican principles? Did he not enter with natural artifice concealed under pompous phraſeology *(omnium, quæ diceret aut ageret arte quadam, oſtentator)* into that accurſed coalition at Pilnitz, merely to excite the ſuſpicion of the reſt of Europe, and to ſtrengthen, as we may call it, the family feeling of whole France to one and indiviſible reſiſtance? Did he not connive at the manifeſto of Brunſwick, and the treaty of Toulon—for what purpoſe under heaven but to arouſe the ſpirit general, the univerſal ſoul of France, and to ſtrengthen, by compreſsion, the total elaſticity of that elaſtic nation? Did he not (we beg

pardon

pardon for the ungentlemanlike phraſe) let the cat out of the bag, when he gave a conſtitution to Corſica, which might naturally excite the envy, the jealouſy of Ireland, and which has probably rendered more diſcontented our capricious countrymen, who have never been ſatisfied (at leaſt theſe ſix hundred years) with *their own* conſtitution, (applauded however, and upholden by a Yelverton, a Beresford, and a Forſter) did he not, did not Mr. Pitt, by the diſplay of ſuch a democratic conſtitution, in which parliaments were ſhortened, penſioners expelled, and the baſis of repreſentation rendered nearly perſonal, did he not *intend* to make Ireland diſcontented with its own conſtitution? Did he not *feed* war, at firſt, by mouthfuls and half meaſures? Did he not ſubſidize kings to their certain deſtruction, and is he not become the financeering MACK of Monarchy? Did he not deliver up the emigrants of France to certain ſlaughter, and is he not at this moment planning the equally

certain deſtruction of all that remain?—Is this man, or is this miniſter, (who calls himſelf a man) a friend to conſtitution or to revolution? Is he to tranquillize or to revolutionize, to reſuſcitate or to ruin the empire?"

The *democrat* will, perhaps, ſilently ſay, "This man is the indirect miniſter of Providence. He is placed as if in the left hand of God, to perform, perforce, his goodwill to mankind, and perhaps it will become a problem to future generations whether in the preſent, liberty has been moſt indebted to Buonaparte or to Pitt.—After having delivered the greateſt part of Europe from chains, he begins *at laſt* with the Britiſh empire. Raſh and reſolute, bold though blind, he is reſolved to cut the riddle, to melt away from vulgar eyes the myſtery of the incoherent connexion called the Iriſh conſtitution, which, whether it is above our reaſon, or whether it is contrary to it, had become a matter of

ſettled

ſettled faith to thoſe political myſtics, whoſe chief pleaſure lies in perfectly conceiving, and partially comprehending. He will talk much of ranks and orders, but here he will level them to the duſt. He will take the middle term out of the Iriſh conſtitution, and will leave nothing but king and people, the monarch ſeen only through the medium of a military rule, and the people having no other object, to which they can aſcribe their grievances, than the crown. He will remove the country, by this Union, for a time, far from royal juſtice or mercy, but nearer to the commander in chief: the buſineſs of the ſtate will be tranſacted by aid-de-camps, the whole country will be converted into a great barrack, (I hear the barrack maſter-general is already appointed) and the Iriſh repreſentatives will be what the Scotch are, the wretched ſemblance of their caſtrated country. But ſuch military regimen can laſt only for a ſeaſon. The nature of government will become *too*

plain, which, in the guiſe of an independent legiſlature and an appendant crown, uſed to play ſo prettily with the fancy, and preſerved an influence over mens' minds nearly in proportion to its unintelligibility. Democracy will then operate upon the diſincumbered mind, on the ſimple policy of ſound underſtanding, and they whoſe object it has been through life to incite their deſpiſed country to a ſenſe of its own dignity, will act with a ſtronger purchaſe.

The ſubverſion of an eſtabliſhed government (the *democrat* will continue to ſay) is always a work of ſome real, and much apparent difficulty; but when ſuch an attempt is made from the quarter of government itſelf, the difficulty muſt vaniſh, and, in this mortal combat of monarchy and ariſtocracy, the people need only be *lookers on*.—Union may therefore be the deſtined means of aſsimilating what is heterogeneous, of cloſing, in ſome meaſure, that great ſchiſm of ſocial life between the higheſt

higheſt and loweſt order; and of pouring a healing oblivion over political animoſities, diſguiſed under pretext of religion. Politico-religious aſcendancies will be ſuperſeded, for a ſeaſon, by the iron ſceptre of Britiſh dominancy; parties and leaderſhips will be re-abſorbed into one ſuperior central power; orange and green will become diſtinctions of colour in the ſame ſubſtance; and the clanſhips of ariſtocracies will be ſwept away, eventually for the good of the whole, as the deſolation of hierarchical eſtabliſhments has been ſuppoſed, by ſome, a neceſſary baſis for the reſurrection of pure and primitive chriſtianity.

A great change is imperiouſly called for. The rooted moral and national evil, which muſt ever ſtand in the way of ſocial improvement, and has been the peculiar curſe of this country, is an HABITUAL CONTEMPT (worſe than injury) of the common people, generated at firſt from the

ſpirit of conqueſt, and nurſed by the ſame ſpirit transfuſed into penal codes, ſyſtems of monopoliſm, and creeds of aſcendancy, until it has grown into a diſeaſe, that affects all the higher orders with hereditary contamination. It is the ſcrophula of the proud and powerful, which has totally relaxed and looſened all the joints of ſociety. It has ſpread its acrimony among the patriots of party, the philoſophers of ſchools, and the moſt ſequacious profeſſions.—The ſtanding exception even to the barren benevolence of general ſpeculation is—their native country; and thus it has neceſſarily happened that the extended family feeling, which ought to bind the different ranks of ſociety into one neighbourhood, is reſolved into an anarchy of ſeparate intereſts, producing for many years paſt periodical and partial inſurrection, and, of late, more connected and premeditated rebellion.

The

The ſyſtem of conqueſt, which gathers the fruit by cutting down the tree; the ſyſtem of mercantile monopoly, which withdraws the manure from the roots; the ſyſtem of influence, which blaſts and withers the branches, or occaſions ſuch partial circulation of vital juice, as is ſeen ſtrangely to bloom and bloſſom in the midſt of barrenneſs and decay; all theſe ſyſtems rendering the great tree of ſociety ſapleſs and unproductive, are finally reſolvable into that *inveterate contempt* of the lower community, which has hitherto counteracted, and muſt ever counteract the eſtabliſhment of free, equal, and *reciprocal* ſociety.—A great change *is* required, and *muſt* prove ſalutary from whatever quarter it comes—"*J'accepteroi le bien public des "mains d'Arimaine même.*"

Ireland has been kept in a ſtate of *ſavage* independence; in ſuch a ſtate as might beſt break down and deſtroy that *mutual* dependence, from which flows the happineſs of the individual, and the true wealth

of

of nations. The inhabitants were inſulated to keep the country ſubjugated; the former in a ſtate of nature; the latter an imperial ſlave. Under the combined oppreſsion of manners and of laws, the country throve into a ſort of barbarous independence and public ſervility—no want of capital, but a partial diſtribution of it—much wealth, but no common wealth—much labour acquiring little property.——The palſy of indolence from the abſence of that diffuſible ſtimulus, property; and an incapability, turned at laſt into an unwillingneſs, of transforming and fixing labour into durable poſſeſsion, and capital ſtock—Irregular, inordinate, and exhauſting *labour*, produced by and for intoxication (the ſource of revenue) inſtead of *induſtry* creating a little ſtock, ſlowly and regularly adding to it; always receiving, always repaying; the happineſs of the individual, the real and imperiſhable wealth of the community. The ultimate object to ſatisfy hunger, which a root ſatisfies; or rather,

rather, much rather to ſuperſede it by liquor (the corruption of grain) ſtimulating too ſhort, convulſive exertion, corroſive to life, and inſtigating to the madneſs, that maltreats and lacerates the miſerable animal, which yields its patient aſsiſtance.—The labourer not more a proprietor than the proprietor a labourer——A race of hunters, called middlemen (hunters forformerly of animals, and latterly of men) introduced in the period of agriculture to invert the progreſsive order of ſociety, and cut off all that cloſe and kind reciprocity, which ought to ſubſiſt between tenant and landlord. The cultivator under the preſſure of a double rent (including tithe, of a triple one) a barbarian under the whole incumbency of ſocial life, with tenure ſo precarious, tenant right ſo diſregarded, as on the expiration of the leaſe inſtantly to give way to the higheſt bidder; without one ſunny ſpot in his whole exiſtence; his proſpects ending with the darkening of the day, and all hope of bettering his ſituation withering and dying in his heart. Then

 ferocious,

ferocious, mad, and calling hope from deſperation, changing torpid miſery into active diſaffection, and riſing by one bound of inſtinct, rather than reaſon, from a ſtate of abandonment and contempt, into reſiſtance, into vindictive inſurrection, into dangerous deliverance, from its *very* danger agitating the ſtrong, but inert mind, fit only for robuſt vices, and now rouſed into a ſenſe of enjoyment, a feeling of pleaſurable elevation, by having it placed in his power to die IN BATTLE.—I come to ſubdue you, ſaid Themiſtocles to the people of Andros, with the help of two powerful deities—neceſsity and force—and we, ſaid the Andrians, have alſo two powerful deities—INDIGENCE and DESPAIR.

In ſuch a ſtate of ſociety—if ſtate it can be called—there muſt be change, and change will ſet the precedent to change.—The new regimen will be rigorous for a while, but it will be impartially ſo.—One equal monopoliſm will abſorb the ſmaller, one mighty dominancy all petty aſcendancies,

cies, and common calamity may produce a common country.—Ariſtocracy, the ally of England will deſert to England, or ſide againſt her—man will remain—the ocean will remain—and the metaphyſics of monarchy, will, in the event, give way to the logic of the people.

Thus, the ſame miniſter who firſt called forth in France the energies that fight for exiſtence, and kept them at the height neceſſary for urging reform into revolution, thence into ultra-revolution, thence into a propagation of the ſame revolutionary ſpirit abroad, for their more permanent ſecurity at home—this ſame miniſter, after turning the ancient and habitual royaliſm of the plurality of the Iriſh people, at firſt, into ambiguous friendſhip, and, at laſt, into undiſguiſed hoſtility, by feeding them with *rations* of redreſs, inſtead of total and magnanimous emancipation — this ſame Jehu of Jacobiniſm, after having ſown the ſeed of internal Union, and forced the ſociety of United Iriſhmen (of

which he himſelf was the founder) from the deſpair of reform, to the deſperation of revolution; after having haſtened forward a rebellion, which he himſelf helped to create; after having thrown off, with cold ingratitude, the yeomanry of the iſland, that *novel* volunteer army *preſſed* into his ſervice by a certain panic of courage, and at firſt ſet on foot by a few gentlemen of the bar, no doubt, with pure intentions, zealous as they were, to wear the *livery* of liberty, but *ignorant* that they were really raiſing a military array againſt a reform, which, but *for them*, had at the time been inevitable;—this ſame miniſter, conſcious that as France has got all by land, and England has all by ſea, there is no point of contact for the contending powers, but at his own home, or *here*, reſolves at all hazards it ſhall be *here*, if any where, and proviſionally places the Iriſh nation in the hollow ſquare of the Britiſh militia, exemplifying the very ſame hug of French fraternity, which in the caſe of Brabant had called forth his execration—this ſame miniſter,

niſter, in his innovating phrenſy, is now preparing to revolutionize radically, where he made it treaſon, radically, to reform, and, conſidering the apparent apathy of exquiſite ſenſibility, as acquieſcence on the part of the people, he is reſolved by the rape of an *Union*, to ſeparate thoſe iſlands for ever;—the king takes the APPLE, but his ſervants cut down the TREE.

Thus might the democratic revolve in his mind, wrapping himſelf up in the cloak of ſilence, and quietly ſubmiſsive to the ſtroke of political, as of natural, diſſolution, certain that from the grave of deſpotiſm, liberty would ſoon ariſe in joyful reſurrection. But I who am not ſo much a democrat as an IRISHMAN, and ſo far indeed an Engliſhman, that I would not wiſh a civil war *with* England to be ſuperadded, or even to ſupercede, a civil war, (alas! alas! hitherto the *conſtitution*, and only conſtitution of my country) I have vainly endeavoured to keep a ſafe, but diſhonorable, ſilence on this occaſion; ſtrong nature will burſt through the tongue-tack

of

of party, and hiſtory has recorded, that the ſon, though before dumb, has ſuddenly ſpoken, has cried aloud when he ſaw an *aſſaſsin* ready to plunge a dagger into the *back* of his father.

A ſenſe of paramount duty, ſuperior to the ſnug ſelfiſhneſs of profeſsional prudence, has alone, compelled me to ſwim with the ſhoal of pamphleteers, to add one to thoſe ſprats of popularity, the capricious herring fry of the hour, that are hawked about our ſtreets, and ſworn to be alive, although the ſame moment that they bounce from their element, they ſqueak and die*.

* I have read ſome of thoſe creole publications, neither a good white nor a good black, from the number I except the pamphlet of a philoſopher) and I have ſmiled at ſeeing them aſſume the very ſentiments and often the expreſſions of a ſociety it was their conſtant practice to viliſy and calumniate; its cuſtom was not to enter into explanation with calumny, but ſurely it may ſmile at this anomalous race of men, ſcattered in abundance thro' all profeſſions, but of late multiplied ſo prodigiouſly at the bar—who hunt preferment with the ſequaciouſneſs of the hound, of ſurly manners, and ſlippery morality; a claſs of men equally proud and paraſitical, when it ſees them purſuing their venal vocation—and judging before trial the men whom in their hearts they believe upright, honeſt, and inflexible, it ſurely may ſmile, when it pities and forgives them.

I hate the truth of a truiſm, a paraphraſe upon two and two making four; and ſuch I deem *moſt* of the arguments *againſt* an Union, the painful and perſevering expanſion of one globule of gold over twenty and ſometimes forty leaves. A ſentence from Fletcher of Saltoon, outweighs, or is at leaſt an equipoiſe to them all:—"In point of right it is plainly above the power of parliament to attempt any ſuch alteration in the conſtitution, for the plain reaſon that members of parliament are but adminiſtrators, and their acts cannot extend ſo far beyond the power given them by their conſtituents, which as underſtood in general, to ſupport or amend the conſtitution either by making new laws, or amending old ones; and though commiſsions to repreſent in parliament are underſtood as in general and moſt ample terms, yet there is one natural condition, which neither needs nor ought to be expreſſed, viz. that the undertakers of the commiſsions ſhall contain themſelves within the verge of the conſtitution, for if they exceed this, they uſurp a power which is not given

them

them—they violate the conſtitution, they annihilate the conſtituent, and they are *puniſhable* as *uſurpers* and traitors."

This Union, then, is a ſubject on which, without feeling much, any man can reaſon a little, or any child—and there is a ſportive analogy in the term Union, which may even make it a ſubject intereſting to the fair. But I think, and I ſay, that the queſtion, which concerns the being of a country, is, in reality, a queſtion of HONOUR, of that high honour, including every other virtue, which, I had almoſt ſaid, is weakened by argument, and is approached by argument, only *to be* weakened and drawn from its citadel. The nation, that does not feel the debaſement of the very propoſition, deſerves to ſuffer the proſtitution: for as certain propoſals may be made to individuals, in which the injury, monſtrous as it is, is loſt in the inſult; which by the one ſex can be repelled only by a look of ineffable contempt, and by the other, with a blow—ſo there are affronts to nations, on which controverſy is contamination; as if we could be

be reaſoned into making a capon of our country—an Eunuch of Ireland—A man of high office, and a prototype of Bar, or rather Bear, wit, is reported to have, ſome time ago, made uſe of a threat towards his country, the vulgar language of which ſhall not pollute my paper, though it does my remembrance, and which may have ſuggeſted to you, Sir, the propriety of ſuch an operation, as may, in five minutes, ſet us free, for ever, from the prominent inſtigation to riot and rebellion.

Such an inſidious and impudent propoſal, to ſwell the loins of the country at the expence of its virility, I think, and I ſay, ſhould be as revolting to the nation, as to a man—and—"if in the infatuated animoſity of parties, (which now virtually concentrate) all regard to the public be not totally and irrecoverably loſt, if that kind of mean ſelfiſhneſs, which ſcarce deſerves to be dignified with the name of avarice, holds not the

poſſeſsion of every breaſt, to ſtamp the iſland with indelible infamy," your propoſition may raiſe that Hibernicism, which it means to annihilate; and a love of country, which, hitherto, has been really, and in good truth, made up of *antipathies*, may be changed into the ſympthy of a common intereſt well practiſed and properly underſtood; an Union againſt Union; a combination of knowledge, ſentiment, and natural feeling, againſt the coalition formed between ſtate craft and ſtate neceſsity, to annihilate Ireland for the good of the Empire, *that is*, as far as ever I could underſtand the word, for the good of England, by its ſelfiſh ſelf England—England—that you have engaged, body and ſoul, in the preſent war; that forgetful of her own liberties, as well as the mode ſhe took to acquire them, was, at firſt, made an accomplice, and at laſt, a principal in attacking the liberties of another nation, until a war, which, originally, neither juſt nor neceſſary, became neceſſary tho' not juſt;

juſt; neceſſary to her own exiſtence, neceſſary to her own ſalvation; what had begun with a diſpute of diplomacy, and the etiquette of an ambaſſador—England, the land of Alfred, and of Edward, and of Locke, led, or driven, from ſtep to ſtep, until ſhe finds it neceſſary for her life to arm the miniſter with a plenary dictatorial power over privilege, perſon, and purſe, and well pleaſed to find Ireland about to add ſtill greater ſtrength to the ſame miniſterial power in a Britiſh Parliament, to fit a ghaſtly ſkeleton of repreſentation, ſtaring that of poor Scotland in the face (a people deſerving of a better fate, like their own Firs, hardy, tough, and durable, reſiſtive to the ſtorm, and of moſt value in foil the leaſt profitable)—England, who, by the conduct of her militia (I ſhudder at the name of ancient Britons) ſeems to have willingly connived at the gradual extenſion, and *judicious* organization of ſuch a military force in this country, as might, when a *proper* op-

portunity offered, be made inſtrumental to complete and continued ſubjugation—England, in fine, attaching her fortunes to the fate of a Mr. Pitt, and delivered up to her own fate by the man of the people—if the people were men.

Let me ſtop to bow to that character—I need not name him—greater, far greater, in his voluntary exile, than Charles, or Diocletian. I had rather divide a cabbage with this man, than a cabinet with that other. I look up to his majeſtic and magnanimous mind with the ſame eyes, that travellers view the Dome of the Pantheon at Rome. When they enter, nothing at firſt ſurpriſes them. They ſee not immediately its greatneſs; its length, breadth, height, ſo nicely proportioned, that they exactly fill the eye, and the more it is attended to, the longer it is examined, its grandeur is increaſed, and their aſtoniſhment. While, perhaps, for the pleaſure of contraſt, they turn their

their view to a tall, ungainly, Egyptian obeliſk, deeply indented with myſterious emblems, and inſcrutible hieroglyphics.

I return to ſay, that patriotiſm may be elicited from the claſh, not of arms, but the embrace of antagoniſt principles; that inſtead of perpetuating a hoſtile mind in the people, who are to live and die in the ſame land, who hang as it were on the ſame maternal breaſt, they ought, and they ſhall be actuated by a fraternity, a reciprocity, a mutuality of mind, that neither an intrinſic interference, whoſe policy, at all times, and particularly now, is to conquer by diviſion, nor an ariſtocratized chriſtianity ſhall continue to make the hatred of our neighbour, the only bond of Union, and a repulſion to all other ſects the principle of our adheſion to each other; that the fraternal ſpirit of chriſtianity ſhall no longer be ill exchanged for the intereſt of an order, or the ſupport of a foreign domination under the pretext of an Union;

that

that men ſhall not place their Chriſt in the clergy, nor their country in an over-channel cabinet, and that Ireland will be no longer that monſtrous and unnatural being, who has loſt the intereſt, which attaches every creature to itſelf, and who is always in danger of deſtruction from his own hands. I think, and I ſay, that now is the time, and may never be recalled, in which Iriſhmen can enter into a ſolemn league and covenant high enough to riſe beyond, to plane above all ſectarian ſelfiſhneſs; broad enough, and long enough to include this whole iſland; and deep enough to undermine a miniſter, who is himſelf the ſervant of ſervants, and the tool of men, he deſpiſes.

I ſay, that our different ſects in religion have been hitherto doing little elſe than tearing in pieces the ſeamleſs garment of our Saviour; and in politics, our poor Ireland has been thrown to the hounds of party, as the reward is flung at the death of the deer,

where

where every one pulls and tears what he can for himſelf; that NOW is the time not only to break down that Black Art of repelling man from man, by the power of certain magical rather than moral words, making the children of one God, and the people of one country cordially *hate* each other; but now alſo is the time to drive Piles into the uncementing ſand of ſociety, on which foundation, the arch of national independence, connecting the north and ſouth, in one level high road of mutual convenience, may reſt in ſtable tranquillity. For otherwiſe ſand ſhall ſucceed to ſand, and nothing but ſand ſhall ever remain.

I ſay to thoſe, who will underſtand me, that they ſhould now judge in what manner it is for their intereſt to act, when they ſee every leſſer job, like little fiſh, about to be ſwallowed up, and for ever ingulphed in the voracious maw of this great *Kraken* of a job, which was before deemed by many an imaginary

imaginary being, but is now ſeen ſwimming with Pontoppidan Pitt upon its back, acroſs *our* channel, for ſtill the half of it is ours. I ſhall ſay no more upon *this* ſubject, for the preſent---Let the Orange ſpirit ſay as much in the ſpirit of peace, and Ireland will yet be---Ireland. Otherwiſe let it continue the BACKSIDE of Britain.

I aver, Sir, in your *hearing*, that as it was the bigotry of the Proteſtant which generated the Papiſt, and the partiality of aſcendancies which begot civil diſtraction, it is now the time for all parties here to break through the ſuſpicions of ignorance, and inſtead of looking at the world through Britain, to look at Britain through the world. Sir, for my own part, I will follow the genuine principles of the Britiſh Conſtitution, even when they emigrate into France; and I will glory in my eſtrangement from your iſland, whenever the dogmas of French deſpotiſm are transfuſed into Britain. When, under ſuch auſpices,

or

or rather the ſhade of ſuch omens, I ſee a plan handed from an Engliſh miniſter to an Engliſh-Iriſh miniſter, like to you in nothing, I know of, but in being young, thin, and ſelf-ſufficient; when I ſee, not an Eaſt-India bill, but a *Weſt-Britain* bill, preparing for diſſolving not only all principles of conſtitution, but the conſtituency itſelf; for removing the ſeat of government *for ever* from the ſoil, and eternizing the provinciality and ſervitude of my country, under an adminiſtration unalterably Engliſh, and everlaſtingly conforming to the intereſts, prejudices, and jealouſies of the ſeat of ſovereignty, leaving us a leaſe of lives renewable for ever of all the *abuſes* of our wretched adminiſtration, and taking from us the fee-ſimple of our country, making it utterly, and ever impracticable for Ireland to manage her own affairs in the way ſhe judges moſt ſuitable to her own intereſt; *when* I ſee all this leze-nation attempted, and about to be executed, merely becauſe this mill-ſtone war is tied round the neck

of the miniſter, and that *he* wants both Iſlands not ſo much to ſtand or fall together, as to ſink both to the bottom with himſelf; if I could not ſuddenly untie the knot which bound me to him, I ſhould wiſh, not for the dagger of Ariſtogiton, which I deteſt, but for the cutting ſword of Alexander. I ſhould ſay to my king, let not this infuriate miniſter drive you to the breach of your coronation oath, by ſubverting a conſtitution, which you have ſworn to defend; and I ſhould ſay to the people, for liberty can never wholly be deſtroyed without the wilful and treacherous co-operation of the people, unite or die.

Puſh away the invading miniſter, as you have done the invading foe. Drive him into the ocean. Let not either republic or monarchy, tranſgreſsing their limits, cajole or conquer your country. While I breathe this ſhort breath of life, I will uphold, as my ſtrength can uphold, and an honeſt man is a ſtrong

a ſtrong one, the republican part of the Britiſh conſtitution, nor ſhall it be the commentaries of an academician, or the faſhion of the day, which ſhall make the principles of John Locke wither in my hand, or in my heart; but I would neither give up my country to a directory, or to a divan, to millions of men or to a ſingle man, who happens to be ſole miniſter. And when I figure in fancy the Genius of my beloved and calumniated country taking his ſtation on ſome mountain of our weſtern coaſt, that, in calm majeſty, ſees the great Atlantic break at its feet, and caſting his eyes on the geographical pre-eminence, and general aſpect of his iſland, ſet as a jewel in the moſt temperate part of the temperate zone, gifted with the fair and overflowing fertility of nature, with ſuch well tempered air, ſuch ſafe and large ports and havens courting the trade of the world, ſuch rivers, and ſuch lakes, I ſhould not be ſurpriſed that if a little miniſter ſhould ſend to him for ſuch a country, he would anſwer,

—COME AND TAKE IT—YES—YES—my country, " moſt choice, forſaken; and moſt " loved deſpiſed;" you ſhall yet have your avengers.

Sir, I do think and I do ſay, that if the cruel alternative be propoſed to me, unite for ever with England, or ſeparate for ever, I would ſay—*ſeparate*, in the name of God and nature. If ſuch be the alternative, let no little pert pre-eminence ſay to me, " look at the map," and attempt to reconcile the perfidy of policy to the policy of geography—Why I would anſwer —If I look on the *map*, Britain belongs to Ireland, but I deteſt this property of nations, and, in return for an Iriſhman inſulting his own country, I ſhall aſſert that the ſeparation of the governments would accompliſh the *Union* of the Britiſh and Iriſh people. Good God! what a paradox!—true—but a paradox is not always contrary to truth; it is only contrary to received opinion. The true ſyſtem of the world

was long a paradox to philoſophers as well as to the people, and when the Genoeſe pilot, in purſuit of the Eaſt Indies, ſteered due *weſt*, he ſteered moſt paradoxically, but, while he was loſing one world, he made another. I will venture the paradox, and ſteering due *weſt*, I will aſſert that the intereſt of *Britain* lies in the real and abſolute independence of Ireland, on the immediate renunciation of all governmental connexion, a juſt compenſation for paſt treatment, but alſo the trueſt wiſdom, by ſecuring our friendſhip in a *ſolitary* world. The ſtranger, the foreigner, the ſuppoſed foe would then become fellow countrymen, fellow citizens, and brothers; and our greater population and capacity to purchaſe would produce to Britain a better market, (to *her* ſupreme felicity,) for there is not a country, which grows and increaſes, that does not, in its collateral conſequences, augment the induſtry of the whole world.

The inherent ſovereignty of Ireland *might* become the ſalvation of Britain; an Union

will

will accelerate her deſtruction. What is this wiſhed-for monopoliſm? The monopoliſt of the whole world would turn it into a deſert, and were any one, or any people, to purchaſe as it were the whole lottery of life, they would, in the end, be a loſer. I ſhall not now enter farther into the ſubject, but I do aſſert that the great perfection of this ſublunary ſyſtem would be ſuch a law of nations, recognized and ſupported, as might cover the univerſality of *independent* countries, fulfilling their duties and aſſerting their rights, with its tutelary authority, defending the weakeſt from the moſt ambitious, and guranteeing to all the full poſſeſsion of their independence, under the ægis of a common power—and hear me for once, Ireland! when I ſay—happineſs never can be had by a people whoſe ſovereignty does not reſt—WITHIN THEMSELVES.

"But if—I quote from Vattel—any one would ravage from a nation an eſſential right, or

or a right, without which it could not hope to ſubſiſt, if an ambitious neighbour threatens liberty, and reſolves to ſubdue it, that country will take council only from its courage; it will not condeſcend to wait for conferences on ſo odious a pretenſion--- It will bring into this quarrel all its efforts, its laſt reſources---It is riſking every thing only to liſten to the leaſt propoſition--- Then they might truly ſay, *una ſalus, nullam ſperare ſalutem.*"

Sir, I take my leave of you---I write in the hurry of my heart---I know, that, the ſame day of her anſwer to the commiſsioners, Queen Anne dictated an order of council, that whoever ſhould be concerned in any *diſcourſe or* libel, or in laying wagers relating to the Union, ſhould be proſecuted with the utmoſt rigor of the law. Until the ſame, or a ſimilar inhibition be iſſued, I may ſpeak, and I will ſay, that as we have ſeen ſmaller triangles erected in our public places, and ſtained with the blood of our countrymen, you are going

going to conſtruct one great TRIANGLE from theſe three kingdoms, to which are to be tyed the majeſty and faith of the Iriſh monarch, and the inherent ſovereignty of the Iriſh people—yes—I will purſue you through the meaſure---I will divulge you at leaſt through this iſland, and if the dying words of a ſingle Iriſhman ſhall be able to revive your remembrance, or awaken your conſcience either as man or as miniſter, what is to be expected from the laſt cry of an expiring nation?——

I am your humble ſervant,

But not yet—Your Slave—

WILLIAM DRENNAN.

Marlborough Street, 19th January, 1799.